

ROBERT BROWNING

THE PIED PIPER
&
OTHER POEMS

EDITED BY
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LIFE OF BROWNING.

ROBERT BROWNING was born in Camberwell on May 7, 1812. His father, who held a position in the Bank of England, was a man of remarkable literary and artistic knowledge, and had a most lovable character. From him Browning acquired, even as a boy, a vast mass of information on all sorts of subjects, and what was more important, an invincible love of reading, which with his wonderful memory made him one of the most learned of English poets. For his mother, 'true type of a Scottish gentlewoman,' he had always the deepest affection.

Browning was educated first at a lady's school near his home, and then at the school of a Mr. Ready, where he remained until he was fourteen years old. From fourteen to eighteen he was under the care of private tutors at home. In his eighteenth year he attended classes at University College, London. He had no other formal education. But he gave himself a far more valuable training in his father's library and by foreign travel.

From the time he left University College, Browning had decided to make poetry the work of his life. His first poem, *Pauline*, was published in 1833. *Paracelsus* appeared two years later; and henceforward he produced a long series of dramas and poems.

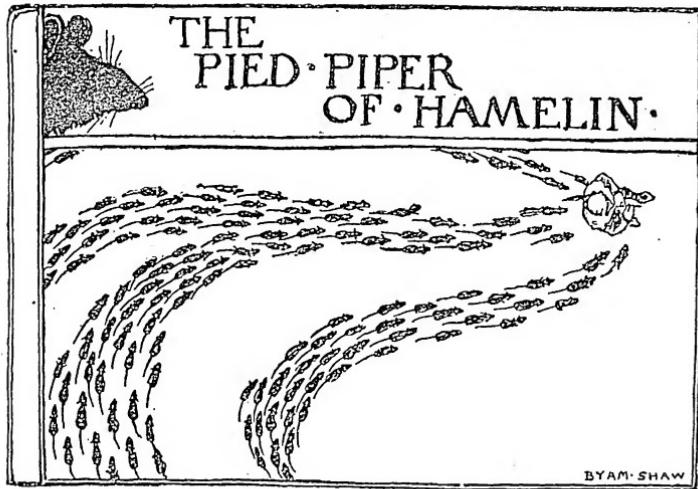
On September 12, 1846, Browning was married to Miss Elizabeth Barrett, who was already well known as a poetess. He took his wife to Italy, the country where he best liked to live, and for fifteen years lived with her a life of almost perfect happiness. His wife died in 1861.

In 1868-9 appeared Browning's longest, if not greatest, work—*The Ring and the Book*. By this

time his genius was beginning to be generally recognised in England, and numerous public honours were offered him. During the last few years of his life he was one of the most famous men in England. But the death of his wife had taken from him the source of his greatest happiness. He might have said, with Johnson, that honours had been delayed till he was solitary, and could not impart them; till he was known, and did not want them.

He died at Venice on December 12, 1889, and was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

Browning's work, at first almost entirely neglected in England, has during the last twenty years been studied with remarkable diligence. But, strangely enough, it has been studied rather as philosophy than as poetry. For this there are two reasons. On the one hand, much of Browning's work bears so little resemblance to what is usually called poetry that a reader might well suppose that it was intended to be anything else: on the other hand, Browning was deeply interested in philosophical problems and the rarer forms of emotion, and many of his poems are devoted to minute analysis of states of mind. But much of Browning's work is without the obscurity which disfigures some of his poems, and much of it is concerned not with the abnormal but with the simple and the normal. In this volume will be found some of the most characteristic of his work: and the reader who approaches it for the first time will find in most of it very little obscurity, and not much deliberate ugliness: he will rather find the passionate expression of emotion, and in some of the poems delight in movement, and a joyous sense of humour.



A CHILD'S STORY, WRITTEN FOR, AND INSCRIBED TO,
W. M. THE YOUNGER.

I.

HAMELIN Town's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its wall on the southern side;
A pleasanter spot you never spied;
But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin, was a pity.

II.

Rats !
They fought the dogs, and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses 'out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,

B.P.

A

Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats,
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.

III.

At last the people in a body
To the Town Hall came flocking :
“ ‘Tis clear,” cried they, “ our Mayor’s a noddy ;
“ And as for our Corporation—shocking
“ To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
“ For dolts that can’t or won’t determine
“ What’s best to rid us of our vermin !
“ You hope, because you’re old and obese,
“ To find in furry civic robe ease ?
“ Rouse up, Sirs ! Give your brains a racking
“ To find the remedy we’re lacking,
“ Or, sure as fate, we’ll send you packing ! ”
At this the Mayor and Corporation
Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV.

An hour they sat in council,
At length the Mayor broke silence :
“ For a guilder I’d my ermine gown sell ;
“ I wish I were a mile hence !
“ It’s easy to bid one rack one’s brain—
“ I’m sure my poor head aches again
“ I’ve scratched it so, and all in vain.
“ Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap ! ”
Just as he said this, what should hap
At the chamber door but a gentle tap ?
“ Bless us,” cried the Mayor, “ what’s that ? ”
(With the Corporation as he sat,
Looking little though wondrous fat;
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
Than a too-long-opened oyster,

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

3

Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous
For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)
"Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?
"Anything like the sound of a rat
"Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

V.

"Come in!"—the Mayor cried, looking bigger.
And in did come the strangest figure!
His queer long coat from heel to head
Was half of yellow and half of red;
And he himself was tall and thin,
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
No tust on cheek nor beard on chin,
But lips where smiles went out and in—
There was no guessing his kith and kin!
And nobody could enough admire
The tall man and his quaint attire:
Quoth one: "It's as my great-grandsire,
"Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
"Had walked this way from his painted tomb-stone!"

VI.

He advanced to the council-table:
And, "Please your honours," said he, "I'm able,
"By means of a secret charm, to draw
"All creatures living beneath the sun,
"That creep, or swim, or fly, or run,
"After me so as you never saw!
"And I chiefly use my charm
"On creatures that do people harm,
"The mole, and toad, and newt, and viper;
"And people call me the Pied Piper."
(And here they noticed round his neck
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
To match with his coat of the self same check;
And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying
As if impatient to be playing

Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)
" Yet," said he, " poor piper as I am,
" In Tartary I freed the Cham,
" Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats;
" I eased in Asia the Nizam
" Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats :
" And, as for what your brain bewilders,
" If I can rid your town of rats
" Will you give me a thousand guilders?"
" One? fifty thousand!"—was the exclamation
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

VII.

Into the street the Piper stept,
Smiling first a little smile,
As if he knew what magic slept
In his quiet pipe the while;
Then, like a musical adept,
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled
Like a candle flame where salt is sprinkled;
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered;
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
Families by tens and dozens,
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—
Followed the Piper for their lives.
From street to street he piped advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing,
Until they came to the river Weser
Wherein all plunged and perished
—Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

5

Swam across and lived to carry
(As he the manuscript he cherished)
To Rat-land home his commentary,
Which was, " At the first shrill notes of the pipe
" I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
" And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
" Into a cider-press's gripe :
" And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,
" And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
" And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
" And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks ;
" And it seemed as if a voice
" (Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
" Is breathed) called out, ' Oh rats, rejoice !
" The world is grown to one vast drysaltery !
" So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
" Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon ! '
" And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
" All ready staved, like a great sun shone
" Glorious scarce an inch before me,
" Just as methought it said, ' Come, bore me ! '
" —I found the Weser rolling o'er me."

VIII.

You should have heard the Hamelin people
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.
" Go," cried the Mayor, " and get long poles !
" Poke out the nests and block up the holes !
" Consult with carpenters and builders,
" And leave in our town not even a trace
" Of the rats ! "—when, suddenly, up the face
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
With a, " First, if you please, my thousand guilders ! "

IX.

A thousand guilders ! The Mayor looked blue ;
So did the Corporation too.
For council dinners made rare havock
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock ;
And half the money would replenish
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.

Soft notes as yet musician's cunning

Never gave the enraptured air)

There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling

Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,

Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,

Little hands clapping, and little tongues chattering,

And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,

Out came the children running.

All the little boys and girls,

With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,

And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,

Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after

The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

XIII.

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood

As if they were changed into blocks of wood,

Unable to move a step, or cry

To the children merrily skipping by—

And could only follow with the eye

That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.

But how the Mayor was on the rack,

And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,

As the Piper turned from the High Street

To where the Weser rolled its waters

Right in the way of their sons and daughters !

However he turned from South to West,

And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,

And after him the children pressed;

Great was the joy in every breast.

" He never can cross that mighty top !

" He's forced to let the piping drop,

" And we shall see our children stop !."

When, lo, as they reached the mountain's side,

A wondrous portal opened wide,

As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;

And the Piper advanced and the children followed,

And when all were in to the very last,

The door in the mountain side shut fast.

Did I say, all? No! One was lame,

And could not dance the whole of the way;

8 THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

And in after years, if you would blame
 His sadness, he was used to say,—
 “It’s dull in our town since my playmates left !
 “I can’t forget that I’m bereft
 “Of all the pleasant sights they see,
 “Which the Piper also promised me ;
 “For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,
 “Joining the town and just at hand,
 “Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew,
 “And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
 “And everything was strange and new ;
 “The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,
 “And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
 “And honey-bees had lost their stings,
 “And horses were born with eagles’ wings ;
 “And just as I became assured
 “My lame foot would be speedily cured,
 “The music stopped and I stood still,
 “And found myself outside the Hill,
 “Left alone against my will.
 “To go now limping as before,
 “And never hear of that country more ! ”

XIV.

Alas, alas for Hamelin !
 There came into many a burgher’s pate
 A text which says that Heaven’s Gate
 Opes to the Rich at as easy rate
 As the needle’s eye takes a camel in !
 The Mayor sent East, West, North, and South,
 To offer the Piper by word of mouth,
 Wherever it was men’s lot to find him,
 Silver and gold to his heart’s content,
 If he’d only return the way he went,
 And bring the children behind him.
 But when they saw ’twas a lost endeavour,
 And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,
 They made a decree that lawyers never
 Should think their records dated duly
 If, after the day of the month and year,
 These words did not as well appear,

" And so long after what happened here

" On the Twenty-second of July,
" Thirteen hundred and Seventy-six ":

And the better in memory to fix
The place of the Children's last retreat,
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—
Where any one playing on pipe or tabour
Was sure for the future to lose his labour.
Nor suffered they Hostelry or Tavern

To shock with mirth a street so solemn ;
But opposite the place of the cavern

They wrote the story on a column,
And on the Great Church Window painted
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away ;
And there it stands to this very day.

And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there's a tribe
Of alien people that ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress
On which their neighbours lay such stress,
To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some subterraneous prison
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why, they don't understand.

XV.

So, Willy, let you and me be wipers
Of scores out with all men—especially pipers !
And, whether they pipe us free, from rats or from mice,
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise.

HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS
FROM GHENT TO AIX.

[16—]

I.

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
“Good speed!” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;
“Speed!” echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our
place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III.

’Twas moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Düsseldorf, ’twas morning as plain as could be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,
So Joris broke silence with, “ Yet there is time! ”

IV.

At Aerschot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one
To stare thro’ the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray.

GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX 11

V.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent
back

For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track ;
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance !
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

VI.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, " Stay
spur !

" Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
" We'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick
wheeze

Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering
knees,

And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

VII.

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky ;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like
chaff ;

Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And " Gallop," gasped Joris, " for Aix is in sight ! "

VIII.

" How they'll greet us"—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-socket's rim.

IX.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,

The lark's on the wing;
 The snail's on the thorn;
 God's in his heaven—
 All's right with the world !

(From *Pippa Passes.*)

BOOT AND SADDLE.

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!
 Rescue my Castle, before the hot day
 Brightens to blue from its silvery gray.
 "Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;
 Many's the friend there, will listen and pray
 "God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay,
 "Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
 Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array.
 Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,
 "Boot, saddle, to horse, and away?"

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,
 Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay!
 "I've better counsellors; what counsel they?
 "Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP.

I.

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon :
 A mile or so away
 On a little mound, Napoléon
 Stood on our storming-day ;
 With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
 Legs wide, arms locked behind,
 As if to balance the prone brow
 Oppressive with its mind.

II.

Just as perhaps he mused "My plans
 " That soar, to earth may fall,
 " Let once my army-leader Lannes
 " Waver at yonder wall,"—
 Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
 A rider, bound on bound
 Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
 Until he reached the mound.

III.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
 And held himself erect
 By just his horse's mane, a boy :
 You hardly could suspect—
 (So tight he kept his lips compressed,
 Scarce any blood came thro')
 You looked twice ere you saw his breast
 Was all but shot in two.

IV.

" Well," cried he, " Emperor, by God's grace
 " We've got you Ratisbon !
 " The Marshal's in the market-place,
 " And you'll be there anon
 " To see your flag-bird flap his vans
 " Where I, to heart's desire,
 " Perched him !" The Chief's eye flashed; his plans
 Soared up again like fire.

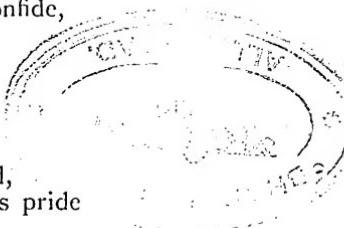
V.

The Chief's eye flashed; but presently
 Softened itself, as sheathes
 A film the mother eagle's eye
 When her bruised eaglet breathes :
 " You're wounded !" " Nay," his soldier's pride
 Touched to the quick, he said :
 " I'm killed, Sire !" And, his Chief beside,
 Smiling the boy fell dead.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR.

I.

As I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,
As I ride, as I ride,
That, as I were double-eyed,
He, in whom our Tribes confide,
Is described, ways untried
As I ride, as I ride.



II.

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride?
Or are witnesses denied—
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied
As I ride, as I ride?

III.

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)
O'er each visioned Homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied?)
To reside—where he died,
As I ride, as I ride:

IV.

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,

16 THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR

Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—
How has vied stride with stride
As I ride, as I ride !

V.

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I loose what fate has tied,
Ere I pried, she should hide
As I ride, as I ride,
All that's meant me : satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride
Stop veins I'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride !

HOME-THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD.

I.

OH, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now !

II.

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows !
Hark ! where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush ; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture !
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noon tide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower,
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower !

HOME-THOUGHTS FROM THE SEA.

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the north-west
died away;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz
Bay;
Bluish mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay;
In the dimmest north-east distance, dawned Gibraltar
grand and gray;
"Here and here did England help me,—how can I help
England?"—say,
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise
and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS.

I.

PLAUE take all your pedants, say I!
He who wrote what I hold in my hand,
Centuries back was so good as to die,
Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land;
This, that was a book in its time,
Printed on paper and bound in leather.
Last month in the white of a matin-prime
Just when the birds sang all together,

II.

Into the garden I brought it to read,
And under the arbute and laurustine
Read it, so help me grace in my need,
From title-page to closing line.
Chapter on chapter did I count,
As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge;
Added up the mortal amount;
And then proceeded to my revenge.

III.

Yonder's a plum-tree, with a crevice
 An owl would build in, were he but sage;
 For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
 In a castle of the middle age,
 Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber;
 When he'd be private, there might he spend
 Hours alone in his lady's chamber:
 Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

IV.

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
 —I knew at the bottom rain-drippings stagnate:
 Next a handful of blossoms I plucked
 To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate;
 Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,
 Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis;
 Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
 Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

V.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
 And gum that locked our friend in limbo,
 A spider had spun his web across,
 And sate in the midst with arms a-kimbo:
 So, I took pity, for learning's sake,
 And, *de profundis, accentibus lætis,*
Cantate! quoth I, as I got a rake,
 And up I fished his delectable treatise.

VI.

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
 With all the binding all of a blister,
 And great blue spots where the ink has run,
 And reddish streaks that wink and glister
 O'er the page so beautifully yellow—
 Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks!
 Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow?
 Here's one stuck in his chapter six!

VII.

How did he like it when the live créatures
 Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,
And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
 Came in, each one, for his right of trover;
When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face
 Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface
 As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet.

VIII.

All that life, and fun, and romping,
 All that frisking, and twisting, and coupling,
While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping,
 And clasps were cracking, and covers suppling !
As if you had carried sour John Knox
 To the play-house at Paris, Vienna, or Munich,
Fastened him into a front-row box,
 And danced off the Ballet with trousers and tunic.

IX.

Come, old martyr ! What ! torment enough is it ?
 Back to my room shall you take your sweet self !
Good bye, mother-beetle; husband-eft, *sufficit* !
 See the snug niche I have made on my shelf :
A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall cover you,
 Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to be gay,
And with E. on each side, and F. right over you,
 Dry-rot at ease till the Judgement-day !

PARTING AT MORNING.

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the sea,
 And the sun looked over the mountain's rim—
And straight was a path of gold for him,
 And the need of a world of men for me.

And bade him make sport and at once stir
Up and out of his den the old monster.
They opened a hole in the wire-work,
Across it, and dropped there a firework,
And fled; one's heart's beating redoubled;
A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled,
The blackness and silence so utter,
By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter;
Then earth in a sudden contortion
Gave out to our gaze her abortion!

Such a brute! Were I friend Clement Marot
(Whose experience of nature's but narrow,
And whose faculties move in no small mist
When he versifies David the Psalmist)

I should study that brute to describe you
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu!

One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy
To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
The tail in the air stiff and straining,
The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
As over the barrier which bounded
His platform, and us who surrounded
The barrier, they reached and they rested
On the space that might stand him in best
stead:

For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,
The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,
And if, in this minute of wonder,
No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,
Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,
The lion at last was delivered?

Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead!
And you saw by the flash on his forehead,
By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,
He was leagues in the desert already,
Driving the flocks up the mountain,
Or catlike couched hard by the fountain
To waylay the date-gathering negress:
So guarded he entrance or egress.

"How he stands!" quoth the King: "we may well
swear,

Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment,—
As if from no pleasing experiment
She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
So long as the process was needful—
As if she had tried in a crucible,
To what "speeches like gold" were reducible,
And, finding the finest prove copper,
Felt the smoke in her face was but proper;
To know what she had *not* to trust to,
Was worth all the ashes, and dust too.
She went out 'mid hothing and laughter;
Clement Marot stayed; I followed after,
And asked, as a grace, what it all meant—
If she wished not the rash deed's recallment?
"For I"—so I spoke—"am a Poet:
"Human nature,—behoves that I know it!"

She told me, "Too long had I heard
"Of the deed proved alone by the word :
"For my love,—what De Lorge would not dare !
"With my scorn—what De Lorge could compare !
"And the endless descriptions of death
"He would brave when my lip formed a breath,
"I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
"Doubt his word—and moreover, perforce,
"For such gifts as no lady could spurn,
"Must offer my love in return.
"When I looked on your lion, it brought
"All the dangers at once to my thought,
"Encountered by all sorts of men,
"Before he was lodged in his den,—
"From the poor slave whose club or bare hands
"Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,
"With no King and no Court to applaud,
"By no shame, should he shrink, overawed,
"Yet to capture the creature made shift,
"That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,
"To the page who last leaped o'er the fence
"Of the pit, on no greater pretence
"Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,
"Lest his pay for a week should be stopped—

" So, wiser I judged it to make
" One trial what 'death for my sake'
" Really meant, while the power was yet mine,
" Than to wait until time should define
" Such a phrase not so simply as I,
" Who took it to mean just 'to die.'
" The blow a glove gives is but weak—
" Does the mark yet discolour my cheek?
" But when the heart suffers a blow,
" Will the pain pass so soon, do you know?"

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
And saw a youth eagerly keeping
As close as he dared to the doorway :
No doubt that a noble should more weigh
His life than befits a plebeian ;
And yet, had our brute been Nemean—
(I judge by a certain calm fervour
The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)
—He'd have scarce thought you did him the worst turn
If you whispered " Friend, what you'd get, first earn ! "
And when, shortly after, she carried
Her shame from the Court, and they married,
To that marriage some happiness, maugre
The voice of the Court, I dared augur.
For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,
Those in wonder and praise, these in envy ;
And in short stood so plain a head taller
That he wooed and won . . . How do you call her ?
The beauty, that rose in the sequel
To the King's love, who loved her a week well ;
And 'twas noticed he never would honour
De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)
With the easy commission of stretching
His legs in the service, and fetching
His wife, from her chamber, those straying
Sad gloves she was always mislaying,
While the King took the closet to chat in,—
But of course this adventure came pat in ;
And never the King told the story,
How bringing a glove brought such glory,

But the wife smiled—" His nerves are grown firmer—
" Mine he brings now and utters no murmur ! "

Venienti occurrite morbo!
With which moral I drop my theorbo.

EVELYN HOPE.

I.

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead.
Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed;
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass.
Little has yet been changed, I think—
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

II.

Sixteen years old when she died !
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name—
It was not her time to love : beside,
Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir—
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

III.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew—
And just because I was thrice as old,
And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
Each was nought to each, must I be told?
We were fellow mortals, nought beside?

IV.

No, indeed ! for God above
 Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
 And creates the love to reward the love,—
 I claim you still, for my own love's sake !
 Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
 Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few—
 Much is to learn and much to forget
 Ere the time be come for taking you.

V.

But the time will come,—at last it will,
 When, Evelyn Hope, what meant, I shall say,
 In the lower earth, in the years long still,
 That body and soul so pure and gay?
 Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
 And your mouth of your own geranium's red—
 And what you would do with me, in fine,
 In the new life come in the old one's stead.

VI.

I have lived, I shall say, so much since then,
 Given up myself so many times,
 Gained me the gains of various men,
 Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes ;
 Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
 Either I missed or itself missed me—
 And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope !
 What is the issue? let us see !

VII.

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while ;
 My heart seemed full as it could hold—
 There was place and to spare for the frank young smile
 And the red young mouth and the hair's young gold.
 So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep—
 See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand.
 There, that is our secret ! go to sleep ;
 You will wake, and remember, and understand.

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL.

(A PICTURE AT FANO.)

I.

DEAR and great Angel, wouldest thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me !
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
Shall find performed thy special ministry
And time come for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

II.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,
And suddenly my head be covered o'er
With those wings, white above the child who prays
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding
Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door !

III.

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door opes, like that child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face instead,
Thou bird of God ! And wilt thou bend me low
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread?

IV.

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till 'every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and supprest.

V.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired !

I think how I should view the earth and skies
And sea, when once again my brow was bared

After thy healing, with such different eyes.

O, world, as God has made it ! all is beauty :
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.

What further may be sought for or declared ?

VI.

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach

(Alfred, dear friend)—that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each

Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away
Over the earth where so much lay before him

Of work to do, though heaven was opening 'o'er him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

VII.

We were at Fano, and three times we went

To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's content

—My angel with me too : and since I care
For dear Guercino's fame, (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,

Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)

VIII.

And since he did not work so earnestly

At all times, and has else endured some wrong,—
I took one thought his picture struck from me,

And spread it out, translating it to song.

My Love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?

This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

PROSPICE.

FEAR death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
 The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
 I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
 The post of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
 Yet the strong man must go:
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
 And the barriers fall,
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
 The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
 The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
 And bade me creep past.
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers,
 The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
 Of pain, darkness, and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
 The black minutes at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend voices that rave,
 Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
 Then a light, then thy breast.
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
 And with God be the rest!

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY.

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY.)

I.

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-
square.
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window
there!

II.

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!

There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast; While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.

III.

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull Just on a mountain's edge as bare as the creature's skull,

Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull! —I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned wool.

IV.

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses! Why?

They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to take the eye!

Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry! You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries by:

Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets high;

And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

V.

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by rights,

'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off the heights:

You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen steam and wheeze,

And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint grey olive trees.

VI.

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all at once;

In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns!

'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three
fingers well,
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great
red bell,
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to
pick and sell.

VII.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to
spout and splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such
foam-bows flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and
paddle and dash
Round the lady atop in the conch—fifty gazers do not
abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her
waist in a sort of sash!

VIII.

All the year long at the villa, nothing's to see though
you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like Death's lean lifted
forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix in the corn
and mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem
a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stunning cicala
is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the
resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of
the fever and chill.

IX.

Ere opening your eyes in the city, the blessed church-
bells begin:
No sooner the bells leave off, than the diligence rattles
in:

And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow candles.
 One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with handles,
 And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better prevention of scandals.
Bang, whang, whang, goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.
 Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life !

INSTANS TYRANNUS.

I.

Of the million or two, more or less,
 I rule and possess,
 One man, for some cause undefined,
 Was least to my mind.

II.

I struck him, he grovelled of course—
 For, what was his force?
 I pinned him to earth with my weight
 And persistence of hate—
 And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,
 As if lots might be worse.

III.

“ Were the object less mean, would he stand
 At the swing of my hand !
 For obscurity helps him and blots
 The hole where he squats.”
 So I set my five wits on the stretch
 To inveigle the wretch.
 All in vain ! gold and jewels I threw,
 Still he couched there perdu.
 I tempted his blood and his flesh,
 Hid in roses my mesh,
 Choicest cates and the flagons best spilth—
 Still he kept to his filth !

IV.

Had he kith now or kin, were access
 To his heart, if I press—
 Just a son or a mother to seize—
 No such booty as these !
 Were it simply a friend to pursue
 'Mid my million or two,
 Who could pay me in person or pelf
 What he owes me himself.
 No ! I could not but smile through my chafe—
 For the fellow lay safe
 As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
 —Through minuteness, to wit.

V.

Then a humour more great took its place
 At the thought of his face,
 The droop, the low cares of the mouth,
 The trouble uncouth
 'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain
 To put out of its pain—
 And, no, I admonished myself,
 " Is one mocked by an elf,
 Is one baffled by toad or by rat?
 The gravamen's in that !
 How the lion, who crouches to suit
 His back to my foot,
 Would admire that I stand in debate !
 But the Small is the Great
 If it vexes you,—that is the thing !
 Toad or rat vex the King ?
 Though I waste half my realm to unearth
 Toad or rat, 'tis well worth ! ”

VI.

So I soberly laid my last plan
 To extinguish the man.
 Round his creep-hole,—with never a break
 Ran my fires for his sake ;
 Over-head, did my thunders combine
 With my under-ground mine :

THE PATRIOT

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Till I looked from my labour content
To enjoy the event.

VII.

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?
Did I say "without friend"?
Say rather, from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe
With the sun's self for visible boss,
While an Arm ran across
Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
Where the wretch was safe prest!
Do you see? Just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!
—So, I was afraid!

THE PATRIOT.

(AN OLD STORY.)

I.

It was roses, roses, all the way,
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad:
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
A year ago on this very day!

II.

The air broke into a mist with bells,
The old walls rocked with the crowds and cries.
Had I said, "Good folks, mere noise repels—
But give me your sun from yonder skies!"
They had answered, "And afterward, what else?"

III.

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun,
To give it my loving friends to keep.
Nought man could do, have I left undone
And you see my harvest, what I reap
This very day, now a year is run.

III.

" Poor, who had plenty once,
 " When gifts fell thick as rain :
 " But they give us nought, for the nonce,
 " And how should we give again ? "

IV.

Then the beggar, " See your sins !
 " Of old, unless I err,
 " Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,
 " Date and Dabitur.

V.

" While Date was in good case
 " Dabitur flourished too :
 " For Dabitur's lenten face,
 " No wonder if Date rue.

VI.

" Would ye retrieve the one ?
 " Try and make plump the other !
 " When Date's penance is done,
 " Dabitur helps his brother.

VII.

" Only, beware relapse ! "
 The Abbot hung his head.
 This beggar might be, perhaps,
 An angel, Luther said.

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL.

[*Time*—Shortly after the revival of learning in Europe.]

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,
 Singing together.
 Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes,
 Each in its tether

Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,
Cared-for till cock-crow.
Look out if yonder's not the day again
Rimming the rock-row !
That's the appropriate country—there, man's thought,
Rarer, intenser,
Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
Chafes in the censer !
Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop ;
Seek we sepulture
On a tall mountain, citied to the top,
Crowded with culture !
All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels ;
Clouds overcome it ;
No, yonder sparkle is the citadel's
Circling its summit !
Thither our path lies—wind we up the heights—
Wait ye the warning ?
Our low life was the level's and the night's ;
He's for the morning !
Step to a tune, square chests, erect the head,
'Ware the beholders !
This is our master, famous, calm, and dead,
Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd ! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,
Safe from the weather !
He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
Singing together,
He was a man born with thy face and throat,
Lyric Apollo !
Long he lived nameless : how should spring take note
Winter would follow ?
Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone !
Cramped and diminished,
Moaned he, " New measures, other feet anon !
My dance is finished "?
No, that's the world's way ! (Keep the mountain-side,
Make for the city.)
He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
Over men's pity ;

Left play for work, and grappled with the world
 Bent on escaping :
 " What's in the scroll," quoth he, " thou keepest furled ?
 Shew me their shaping,
 Theirs, who most studied man, the bard and sage,—
 Give ! "—So he gowned him,
 Straight got by heart that book to its last page :
 Learned, we found him !
 Yea, but we found him bald too—eyes like lead,
 Accents uncertain :
 " Time to taste life," another would have said,
 " Up with the curtain ! "
 This man said rather, " Actual life comes next ?
 Patience a moment !
 Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text
 Still, there's the comment.
 Let me know all. Prate not of most or least,
 Painful or easy :
 Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,
 Ay, nor feel queasy ! "
 Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,
 When he had learned it,
 When he had gathered all books had to give.
 Sooner, he spurned it !
 Image the whole, then execute the parts—
 Fancy the fabric
 Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
 Ere mortar dab brick !

(Here's the town-gate reached : there's the market-place
 Gaping before us.)
 Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
 (Hearten our chorus !)
 Still before living he'd learn how to live—
 No end to learning.
 Earn the means first—God surely will contrive
 Use for our earning.
 Others mistrust and say—" But time escapes,—
 Live now or never ! "
 He said, " What's Time ? leave Now for dogs and apes !
 Man has Forever."

Back to his book then : deeper drooped his head ;
Calculus racked him :
Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead ;
Tussis attacked him :
“ Now, Master, take a little rest ! ”—not he !
(Caution redoubled !
Step two a-breast, the way winds narrowly.)
Not a whit troubled,
Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
Fierce as a dragon
He, (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)
Sucked at the flagon.
Oh, if we draw a circle premature,
Heedless of far gain,
Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure,
Bad is our bargain !
Was it not great? did not he throw on God,
(He loves the burthen)—
God's task to make the heavenly period
Perfect the earthen ?
Did not he magnify the mind, shew clear
Just what it all meant?
He would not discount life, as fools do here,
Paid by instalment !
He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success
Found, or earth's failure :
“ Wilt thou trust death or not ? ” he answered “ Yes.
Hence with life's pale lure ! ”
That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it :
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit :
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses a unit.
That, has the world here—should he need the next,
Let the world mind him !
This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
Seeking shall find Him.

OVER THE SEA

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So, with the throttling hands of Death at strife,
 Ground he at grammar;
 Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife :
 While he could stammer
 He settled *Höti*'s business—let it be !—
 Properly based *Oun*—
 Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
 Dead from the waist down.
 Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place.
 Hail to your purlieus,
 All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
 Swallows and curlews !
 Here's the top-peak ! the multitude below
 Live, for they can, there.
 This man decided not to Live but Know—
 Bury this man there?
 Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds
 form,
 Lightnings are loosened,
 Stars come and go ! let joy break with the storm—
 Peace let the dew send !
 Loft designs must close in like effects :
 Loftily lying,
 Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,
 Living and dying.

OVER THE SEA.

SONG.

OVER the sea our galleys went,
 With cleaving prows in order brave
 To a speeding wind and a bounding wave,
 A gallant armament :
 Each bark built out of a forest-tree
 Left leafy and rough as first it grew,
 And nailed all over the gaping sides,
 Within and without, with black bull-hides,
 Seethed in fat and suppled in flame,
 To bear the playful billows' game :

OVER THE SEA

So, each good ship was rude to see,
Rude and bare to the outward view,
 But each upbore a stately tent
Where cedar pales in scented row
Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine,
And an awning drooped the mast below,
In fold on fold of the purple fine,
That neither noontide nor starshine
Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,
 Might pierce the regal tenement.
When the sun dawned, oh, gay and glad
We set the sail and plied the oar;
But when the night-wind blew like breath,
For joy of one day's voyage more,
We sang together on the wide sea,
Like men at peace on a peaceful shore;
Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,
Each helm made sure by the twilight star,
And in a sleep as calm as death,
We, the voyagers from afar,
 Lay stretched along, each weary crew
In a circle round its wondrous tent
Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich scent,
 And with light and perfume, music too:
So the stars wheeled round, and the darkness past,
And at morn we started beside the mast,
And still each ship was sailing fast.

Now, one morn, land appeared—a speck
Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky:
"Avoid it," cried our pilot, "check
 The shout, restrain the eager eye!"
But the heaving sea was black behind
For many a night and many a day,
And land, though but a rock, drew nigh;
So, we broke the cedar pales away,
Let the purple awning flap in the wind,
 And a statue bright was on every deck!
We shouted, every man of us,
And steered right into the harbour thus,
With pomp and pæan glorious.

A hundred shapes of lucid stone !
All day we built its shrine for each,
A shrine of rock for everyone,
Nor paused till in the westering sun
We sat together on the beach
To sing because our task was done.
When lo ! what shouts and merry songs !
What laughter all the distance stirs !
A loaded raft with happy throngs
Of gentle islanders !
" Our isles are just as hand," they cried,
" Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping ;
" Our temple-gates are opened wide,
" Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping
" For these majestic forms "—they cried.
Oh, then we awoke with sudden start
From our deep dream, and knew, too late,
How bare the rock, how desolate,
Which had received our precious freight :
Yet we called out—" Depart !
" Our gifts, once given, must here abide.
" Our work is done ; we have no heart
" To mar our work,"—we cried.

(From *Paracelsus.*)

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL.

MORNING, evening, noon and night,
" Praise God !" sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned
Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well ;
O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period
He stopped and sang, " Praise God ! "

Then back again his curls he threw,
And cheerful turned to work anew.

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

Said Blaise, the listening monk, " Well done ;
" I doubt not thou art heard, my son :

" As well as if thy voice to-day
" Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

" This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
" Praised God from Peter's dome."

Said Theocrite, " Would God that I
" Might praise him, that great way, and die ! "

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway,
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, " Nor day nor night
" Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,
Spread his wings and sank to earth ;

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,
Lived there, and played the craftsman well ;

And morning, evening, noon, and night,
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew :
The man put off the stripling's hue :

The man matured and fell away
Into the season of decay :

And ever o'er the trade he bent,
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will; to him, all one
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, " A praise is in mine ear;
" There is no doubt in it, no fear :

" So sing old worlds, and so
" New worlds that from my footstool go.

" Clearer loves sound other ways :
" I miss my little human praise."

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'Twas Easter Day; he flew to Rome,
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite.

And all his past career
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,
Till on his life the sickness weighed;

And in his cell, when death drew near,
An angel in a dream brought cheer :

And rising from the sickness drear
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned,
And on his sight the angel burned.

" I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell
" And set thee here : I did not well.

" Vainly I left my angel-sphere,
" Vain was thy dream of many a year.

" Thy voice's praise seemed weak ; it dropped—
" Creation's chorus stopped !

" Go back and praise again
" The early way, while I remain.

On many a flinty furlong of this land.
 Also the country-side is all on fire
 With rumours of a marching hitherward—
 Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son,
 A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear;
 Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls :
 I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.
 Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,
 And once a town declared me for a spy,
 But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,
 Since this poor covert ~~where~~ I pass the night,
 This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence
 A man with plague-sores at the third degree
 Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here !
 'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
 To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip
 And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.
 A viscid choler is observable
 In tertians, I was nearly bold to say,
 And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
 Than our school wots off : there's a spider here
 Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,
 Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey back ;
 Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his mind,
 The Syrian run-a-gate I trust this to ?
 His service payeth me a sublime
 Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.
 Best wait : I reach Jerusalem at morn,
 There set in order my experiences,
 Gather what most deserves and give thee all—
 Or I might add, Judea's gum-tragacanth
 Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,
 Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,
 In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease
 Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy—
 Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar—
 But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay : my Syrian blinketh gratefully,
 Protesteth his devotion is my price—
 Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal?

Should eat itself into the life of life,
 As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all !
 For see, how he takes up the after-life.
 The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,
 Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
 The body's habit wholly laudable,
 As much, indeed, beyond the common health
 As he were made and put aside to shew.
 Think, could we penetrate by any drug
 And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,
 And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep !
 Whence has the man the balm that brightens all ?
 This grown man eyes the world now like a child.
 Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,
 Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
 To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,
 Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the case,—
 He listened not except I spoke to him,
 But folded his two hands and let them talk,
 Watching the flies that buzzed : and yet no fool.
 And that's a sample how his years must go.
 Look if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
 Should find a treasure, can he use the same
 With straightened habits and with tastes starved small,
 And take at once to his impoverished brain
 The sudden element that changes things,
 —That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand,
 And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust ?
 Is he not such a one as moves to mirth—
 Warily parsimonious, when's no need,
 Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times ?
 All prudent counsel as to what befits
 The golden mean, is lost on such a one.
 The man's fantastic will is the man's law.
 So here—we'll call the treasure knowledge, say—
 Increased beyond the fleshly faculty—
 Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
 Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing Heaven.
 The man is witless of the size, the sum,
 The value in proportion of all things,
 Or whether it be little or be much.

AN EPISTLE

Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
Assembled to besiege his city now,
And of the passing of a mule with gourds—
'Tis one ! Then take it on the other side,
Speak of some trifling fact—he will gaze rapt
With stupor at its very littleness—
(Far as I see) as if in that indeed
He caught prodigious import, whole results ;
And so will turn to us the bystanders
In ever the same stupor (note this point)
That we too see not with his opened eyes !
Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
Preposterously, at cross purposes.
Should his child sicken unto death,—why, look
For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
Or pretermission of his daily craft—
While a word, gesture, glance, from that same child
At play or in the school or laid asleep,
Will start him to an agony of fear,
Exasperation, just as like ! demand
The reason why—" 'Tis but a word," object—
"A gesture"—he regards thee as our lord
Who lived there in the pyramid alone,
Looked at us, dost thou mind, when being young
We both would unadvisedly recite
Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,
Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
Thou and the child have each a veil alike
Thrown o'er your heads from under which ye both
Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match
Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know !
He holds on firmly to some thread of life—
(It is the life to lead perforceedly)
Which runs across some vast distracting orb
Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—
The spiritual life around the earthly life !
The law of that is known to him as this—
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.
So is the man perplexed with impulses

Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,
 Proclaiming what is Right and Wrong across—
 And not along—this black thread through the blaze—
 “It should be” balked by “here it cannot be.”
 And oft the man’s soul springs into his face
 As if he saw again and heard again
 His sage that bade him “Rise” and he did-rise.
 Something—a word, a tick of the blood within
 Admonishes—then back he sinks at once
 To ashes, that was very fire before,
 In sedulous recurrence to his trade
 Whereby he earneth him the daily bread—
 And studiously the humbler for that pride,
 Professedly the faultier that he knows
 God’s secret, while he holds the thread of life.
 Indeed the especial marking of the man
 Is prone submission to the Heavenly will—
 Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
 ‘Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last
 For that same death which will restore his being
 To equilibrium, body loosening soul
 Divorced even now by premature full growth:
 He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
 So long as God please, and just how God please.
 He even seeketh not to please God more
 (Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.
 Hence I perceive not he affects to preach
 The doctrine of his sect whate’er it be—
 Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do.
 How can he give his neighbour the real ground,
 His own conviction? Ardent as he is—
 Call his great truth a lie, why still the old
 “Be it as God please” reassurETH him.
 I probed the sore as thy disciple should—
 “How, beast,” said I, “this stolid carelessness
 Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
 To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
 Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?”
 He merely looked with his large eyes on me.
 The man is apathetic, you deduce?
 Contrariwise he loves both old and young,

Able and weak—affects the very brutes
And birds—how say I? flowers of the field—
As a wise workman recognises tools
In a master's workshop, loving what they make.
Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb :
Only impatient, let him do his best,
At ignorance and carelessness and sin—
An indignation which is promptly curbed.
As when in certain travels I have feigned
To be an ignoramus in our art
According to some preconceived design,
And happed to hear the land's practitioners
Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,
Prattle fantastically on disease,
Its cause and cure—and I must hold my peace !

Thou wilt object—why have I not ere this
Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
Who wrought this cure, enquiring at the source,
Conferring with the frankness that befits?
Alas ! it griezeth me, the learned leech
Perished in a tumult many years ago,
Accused,—our learning's fate,—of wizardry,
Rebellion, to the setting up a rule
And creed prodigious as described to me.
His death which happened when the earthquake fell
(Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
To occult learning in our lord the sage
That lived there in the pyramid alone)
Was wrought by the mad people—that's their wont—
On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—
How could he stop the earthquake? That's their way !
The other imputations must be lies :
But take one—though I loathe to give it thee,
In mere respect to any good man's fame!
(And after all our patient Lazarus
Is stark mad—should we count on what he says?
Perhaps not—though in writing to a leech
'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)
This man so cured regards the curer then,

As—God forgive me—who but God himself,
Creator and Sustainer of the world,
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile !

—'Sayeth that such a One was born and lived,
Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,
Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,
And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,
And must have so avouched himself, in fact,
In hearing of this very Lazarus
Who saith—but why all this of what he saith?
Why write of trivial matters, things of price
Calling at every moment for remark?
I noticed on the margin of a pool
Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange !

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,
Which, now that I review it, needs must seem
Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth.
Nor I myself discern in what is writ
Good cause for the peculiar interest
And awe indeed this man has touched me with.
Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness
Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus—
I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills
Like an old lion's check-teeth. Out there came
A moon made like a face with certain spots
Multiform, manifold, and menacing :
Then a wind rose behind me. So we met
In this old sleepy town at unaware,
The man and I. I send thee what is writ.
Regard it as a chance, a matter risked
To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose,
Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.
Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine,
Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell !

The very God ! think, Abib ; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—
So, through the thunder comes a human voice

Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no
wild heat
Were now raging to torture the desert!"

III.

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my
feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder: The tent was
unlooped;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I
stooped;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all
withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my
way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once
more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not
afraid,
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no
voice replied.
At the first I saw nought but the blackness; but soon
I descried
A something more black than the blackness—the vast,
the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow into
sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all;—
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof,—
showed Saul.

IV.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop; both arms
stretched out wide
On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to
each side:
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there,—as, caught
in his pangs
And waiting his change the king-serpent all heavily
hangs,

Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance
come
With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and
stark, blind and dumb.

v.

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine
round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide—those
sunbeams like swords !
And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one
after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door, till folding be
done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they
have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the
stream's bed ;
And now one after one seeks its lodgings, as star
follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so
far !

vi.

—Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will
each leave his mate
To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets
elate,
Till for boldness they fight one another : and then, what
has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand
house—
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and
half mouse !—
God made all the creatures and gave them our love and
our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family
here.

VII.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—And then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey—“ Bear, bear him along
With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets ! are balm-seeds not here,
To console us ? The land has none left, such as he on the bier.
Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother ! ”—And then, the glad chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next, she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then, the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch
Nought can break; who shall harm them, our friends?
—Then, the chorus intoned
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned . . .
But I stopped here—for here in the darkness, Saul groaned.

VIII.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened apart;
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered,—and sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban at once with a start—
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.
So the head—but the body still moved not, still hung there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,
As I sang,—

IX.

" Oh, our manhood's prime vigour; no spirit feels
waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing, nor sinew
unbraced.
Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up
to rock—
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree,—the
cool silver shock
Of the plunge in a pool's living water,—the hunt of
the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his
lair.
And the meal—the rich dates—yellowed over with gold
dust divine,
And the locust's-flesh steeped in the pitcher; the full
draught of wine,
And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bull-
rushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and
well.
How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to
employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses, for ever in
joy!
Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose
sword thou didst guard
When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for
glorious reward?
Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as
men sung
The low song of the nearly-departed, and heard her
faint tongue
Joining in while it could to the witness. ' Let one
more attest,
I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all
was for best . . .'
Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph, not
much—but the rest.
And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working
whence grew

Such result as from seething grape-bundles, the spirit
strained true !
And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of
wonder and hope,
Present promise, and wealth of the future beyond the
eye's scope—
Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is
thine :
And all gifts which the world offers singly, on one
head combine !
On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and
rage, like the throe
That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour, and lets the
gold go :
High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crown-
ing it,—all
Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King
Saul ! ”

X.

And lo, with that leap of my spirit, heart, hand, harp
and voice,
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding
rejoice
Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when,
dare I say,
The Lord's army in rapture of service, strains through
its array,
And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—“ Saul ! ” criéd I,
and stopped,
And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul,
who hung propt
By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by
his name.
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes
right to the aim,
And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that
held, (he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a
broad bust of stone

A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,—leaves
grasp of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down
to his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black but alive yet, your
mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages
untold—
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each
furrow and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all hail,
there they are!
Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the
nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green
on its crest
For their food in the ardours of summer! One long
shudder thrilled
All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was
stilled,
At the King's self left standing before me, released and
aware.
What was gone, what remained? all to traverse 'twixt
hope and despair—
Death was past, life not come—so he waited. Awhile
his right hand
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forth-
with to remand
To their place what new objects should enter: 'twas
Saul as before.
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt
any more
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from
the shore
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's slow
decline
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and
entwine
Base with base to knit strength more intense: so, arm
folded in arm
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

XI.

What spell or what charm,
(For, awhile there was trouble within me) what next
should I urge
To sustain him where song had restored him?—Song
filled to the verge
His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it
yields
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty!
Beyond, on what fields,
Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten the
eye
And bring blood to the lip, and command them the cup
they put by?
He saith, "It is good"; still he drinks not—he lets me
praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

XII.

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pastures, when round
me the sheep
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in
sleep,
And I lay in my hollow, and mused on the world that
might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the
hill and the sky:
And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained to be
passed with my flocks,
Let me people at least with my fancies, the plains and
the rocks,
Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the
show
Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall
know!
Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the
courage that gains,
And the prudence that keeps what men strive for."
And now these old trains

Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so once
more the string
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus--

XIII.

"Yea, my king,"
I began—"thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts
that spring
From the mere mortal life held in common by man and
by brute:
In our flesh grows the branch¹ of this life, in our soul,
it bears fruit.
Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its
stem trembled first
Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler; then
safely outburst
The fan-branches all round; and thou mindedst when
these too, in turn
Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect: yet
more was to learn,
Ev'n the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our
dates shall we slight,
When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care
for the plight
Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced them?
Not so! stem and branch
Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the
palm-wine shall staunch
Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee
such wine.
Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for! the spirit be
thine!
By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still
shalt enjoy
More indeed, than at first when unconscious, the life of
a boy.
Crush that life, and behold its wine running! each
deed thou hast done
Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e'en as
the sun

Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him,
though tempests efface
Can find nothing his own deed produced not, nay,
everywhere trace
The results of his past summer prime—so, each ray of
thy will,
Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over,
shall thrill
Thy whole people the countless, with ardour, till they
too give forth
A like cheer to their sons, who in turn fill the south
and the north
With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse
in the past.
But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last.
As the lion when age dims his eye-ball, the rose at her
height,
So with man—so his power and his beauty for ever
take flight.
No! again a long draught of my soul-wine! look forth
o'er the years—
Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin
with the seer's!
Is Saul dead? in the depth of the vale make his tomb—
bid arise
A grey mountain of marble heaped four-square, till
built to the skies.
Let it mark where the great First King slumbers—
whose fame would ye know?
Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record
shall go
In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was Saul,
so he did;
With the sages directing the work, by the populace
chid,—
For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised there! Which
fault to amend,
In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon
they shall spend
(See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their praise, and
record

With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the statesman's great word
 Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's a-wave
 With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when prophet winds rave:
 So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their part
 In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God that thou art."

XIV.

And behold while I sang.. But O Thou who didst grant me that day,
 And before it not seldom hast granted, they help to essay
 Carry on and complete an adventure,—my Shield and my Sword
 In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was my word,—
 Still be with me, who then at the summit of human endeavour
 And scaling the highest man's thought could, gazed hopeless as ever
 On the new stretch of Heaven above me—till, Mighty to save,
 Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's throne from man's grave!
 Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my heart,
 Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels that night I took part,
 As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep,
 And still fear lest the terrible glory evanish like sleep!
 For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while Hebron upheaves
 The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and Kidron retrieves
 Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

xv.

I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever
more strong
Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly
resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand
replumed
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted
the swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his counte-
nance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins
as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp
set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had
bent
The broad brow from the daily communion; and still,
though much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same,
God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never
quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop, till, stayed by the
pile
Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he leaned
there awhile,
And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-
prop, to raise
His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched
on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all times, to the man patient
there,
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first
I was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast
knees
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like
oak-roots which please

To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know
 If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not, but slow
 Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care
 Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: thro' my hair
 The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head, with kind power—
 All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.
 Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinised mine—
 And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the sign?
 I yearned—"Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,
 I would add to that life of the past, both the future and this.
 I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,
 At this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's heart to dispense!"

XVI.

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song more! out-broke—
 "I have gone the whole round of Creation: I saw and I spoke!
 I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain
 And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—returned him again
 His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw.
 I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet all's law!
 Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked
 To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dewdrop was asked.

Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at wisdom
laid bare.

Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the
Infinite care!

Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?

I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no
less,

In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen
God

In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and
the clod.

And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises
it too)

The submission of Man's nothing-perfect to God's All-
Complete,

As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet!
Yet with all this abounding experience, this Deity
known,

I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of
my own.

There's one faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hood-
wink,

I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)
Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst
E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold! I could love if I
durst!

But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake
God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain, for
love's sake!

—What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when
doors great and small,

Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the
hundredth appal?

In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the
greatest of all?

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? here,
the parts shift?

Here, the creature surpass the Creator, the end, what
Began?—

Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
 And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?
 Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less power,
 To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower
 Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,
 Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?
 And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)
 These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the best?
 Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height
 This perfection,—succeed with life's dayspring, death's minute of night?
 Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the mistake,
 Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him awake
 From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set
 Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new harmony yet
 To be run, and continued, and ended—who knows?—or endure!
 The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make sure.
 By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,
 And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggle in this.

XVII.

"I believe it! 'tis Thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive:
 In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.

All's one gift : thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt
to my prayer

As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to
the air.

From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy
dread Sabaoth :

I will?—the mere atoms despise me ! and why am I loth
To look that, even that in the face too? why is it I dare
Think but lightly of such impuissance? what stops my
despair?

This ;—'tis not what man Does which exalts him, but
what man Would do !

See the king—I would help him but cannot, the wishes
fall through.

Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor
to enrich,

To fill up his life, to starve my own out, I would—
knowing which,

I know that my service is perfect.—Oh, speak through
me now !

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wilt Thou—
so wilt Thou !

So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost
Crown—

And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor
down

One spot for the creature to stand in ! It is by no
breath,

Turn of eye, wave of hand, that Salvation joins issue
with death !

As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of Being be-
loved !

He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall
stand the most weak.

'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for ! my flesh,
that I seek

In the Godhead ! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall
be

A Face like my face that receives thee : a Man like
to me,

Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever ! a Hand
like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee ! See
the Christ stand ! ”

xviii.

I know not too well how I found my way home in the
night.
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to
right,
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive—the
aware—
I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strug-
glingly there,
As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—
Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell
loosed with her crews ;
And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled
and shot
Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge : but I
fainted not.
For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported—
suppressed
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy
behest,
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank
to rest.
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from
earth—
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day’s tender
birth ;
In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the
hills ;
In the shuddering forests’ new awe ; in the sudden
wind-thrills ;
In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with an
eye sidling still
Tho’ averted, in wonder and dread ; and the birds stiff
and chill
That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid
with awe !

E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the new
Law.
The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by
the flowers;
The same worked in the heart of the cedar, and moved
the vine-bowers.
And the little brooks witnessing, murmured, persistent
and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—"E'en so!
it is so."

NOTES.

(R. at the end of a note indicates that it is taken from Mr. F. Ryland's *Selections from Browning*.)

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN.

- p. 1. Several different versions of this story exist. One version makes Newport (I. of W.) the scene of it.
- p. 1. Hamelin. Hamelin in Hanover.
- p. 1. W. M. William Macready, the eldest boy of Macready the actor.
- p. 2. guilder, a Dutch coin of uncertain value. The modern guilder is worth 1s. 8d.
- p. 4. Cham, another form of *khan*=prince.
- p. 4. Nizam, ruler. 'The title of princes who ruled over a large part of the Deccan' (R.).
- p. 5. As he the manuscript. Caesar is said to have swum across the harbour of Alexandria, holding the manuscript of his *Commentaries* above his head out of the water.
- p. 6. Caliph, a successor of Mahomet: here the ruler of Bagdad.
- p. 7. Koppelberg Hill is unknown except in the stories of the Pied Piper.

HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX.

- p. 10. There is no historical basis for this poem. The ride from Aix to Ghent would be about 140 miles.

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP.

- p. 13. According to Mrs. Orr's *Handbook*, the story is true, but its actual hero was a man.
- p. 14. Lannes (1769-1809), one of Napoleon's marshals.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR.

- p. 15. The Metidja is a plain in the north of Algeria.
 p. 15. Abd-el-Kadr, an Arab chief of Algiers who resisted the French in 1833 (Birrell).

SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS.

- p. 17. Sibrandus is apparently the name of the author of the book whose fate is told in the poem.
 p. 18. *de profundis*, etc., from the depths sing with joyful accents.

THE GLOVE.

- p. 20. This story is also told by Schiller (*Der Handschuh*) and by Leigh Hunt (*The Glove and the Lions*). Browning has given it a new ending.
 p. 20. Peter Ronsard, the French poet (1524-1585).
 p. 20. King Francis, Francis I., King of France.
 p. 20. Naso, Ovid, who tells the story of Ixion in the *Metamorphoses*.
 p. 20. Ixion, thinking to embrace Juno, the Queen of Heaven, finds himself clasping a cloud.
 p. 20. scarab, beetle.
 p. 21. Clement Marot (1496-1544), a French satirist, who made a translation of the Psalms.
 p. 21. Illum Juda, etc. *Apocalypse* v. 5 (Vulgate version).
 p. 25. Venienti occurrите morbo, try to remedy the coming evil (Persius, *Sat.* 3. 64).

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL.

- p. 27. The picture referred to in this poem 'represents an angel, standing with outstretched wings by a little child. The child is half kneeling on a kind of pedestal, while the angel joins its hands in prayer: its gaze directed upward towards the sky, from which cherubs are looking down.' (Mrs. S. Orr, *Handbook to Browning's Works*, p. 248.)
 p. 27. Fano is on the Italian coast of the Adriatic.
 p. 28. Alfred, dear friend, Alfred Domett. He went to New Zealand.
 p. 28. Wairoa, a river in North Island, New Zealand.

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY.

- p. 32. Pulcinello-trumpet, the trumpet of a mountebank.
 p. 32. his crown and his lion, 'the crowned lion was the badge of the dukes of Modena' (R.).

NOTES

INSTANS TYRANNUS.

p. 33. Instans Tyrannus, the threatening tyrant.

THE TWINS.

p. 36. The story is in Luther's *Table Talk*.

p. 37. Date, give; Dabitur, it shall be given.

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL.

p. 40. Calculus, the disease known as 'stone'.

p. 40. Tussis, cough.

p. 40. soul-hydroptic, 'with dropsy of the soul. Dropsy often causes intense thirst' (R.).

p. 41. Hoti, Oun, De, three Greek particles whose uses the grammarian explained.

AN EPISTLE.

p. 47. Vespasian, the Roman emperor who came to put down the Jewish rebellion (67 A.D.). His son Titus continued the war after his father's death, and besieged and took Jerusalem.

p. 47. gum-tragacanth, 'a gum from a small Oriental shrub, used to stiffen fabrics, etc.' (R.).

p. 50. Greek fire, a liquid concoction, used in warfare, which burned fiercely.

p. 53. borage, 'once a favourite medicinal herb' (R.).

SAUL.

p. 54. See 1 Sam. chap. xvi.

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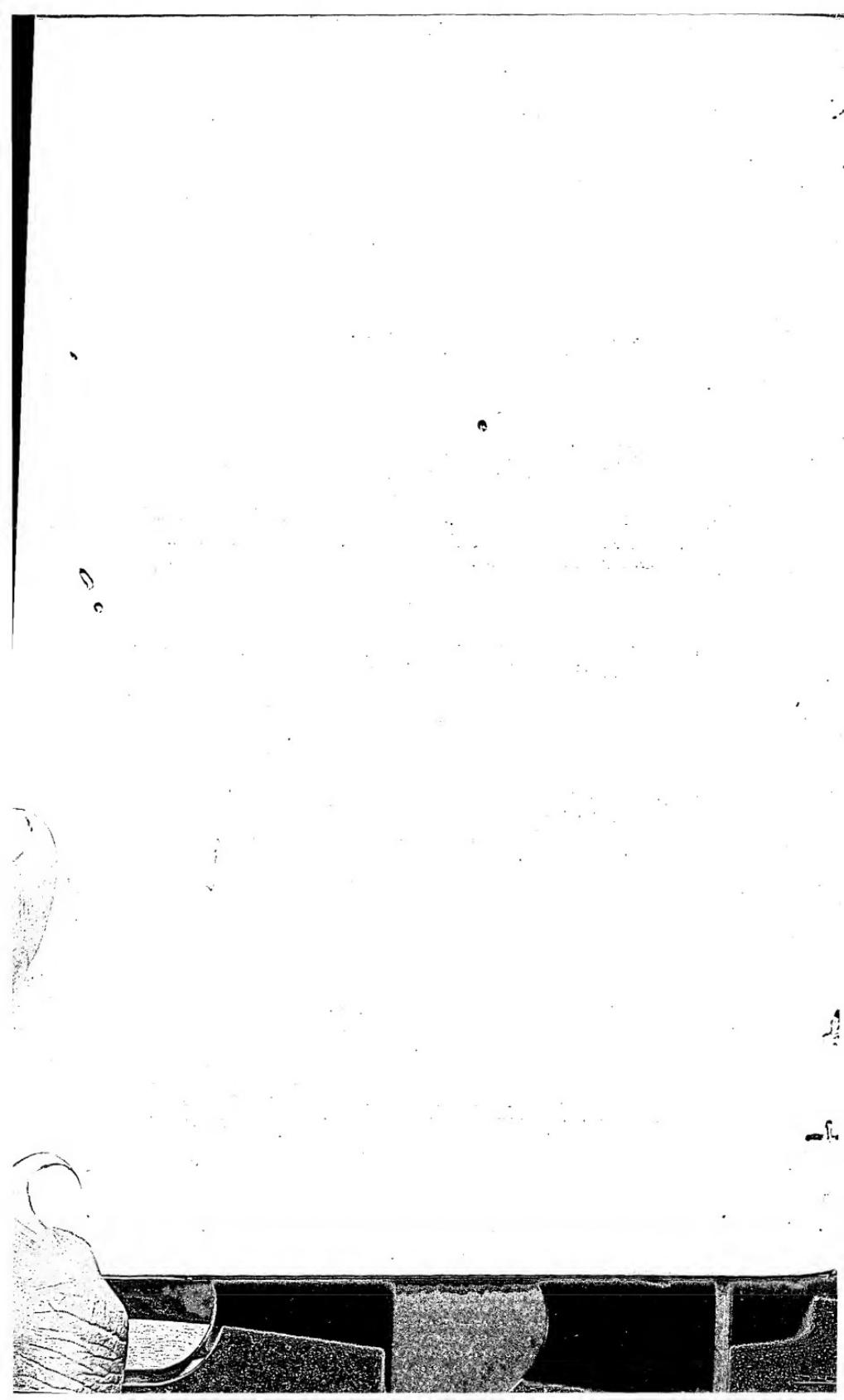
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